

FDA Offers Valuable Information about Drug Use and Safety in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina

The Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER) at the FDA is providing interested persons with information on the use of drugs that have been potentially contaminated by flooding or unsafe water and also the use of temperature-sensitive drug products that have been involved in a temporary electrical power failure.

Drugs (pills, oral liquids, drugs for injection, inhalers, skin medications) that have been exposed to flood or unsafe municipal water may become contaminated. This contamination may lead to diseases that can cause serious health effects.

We recommend that drug products – even those in their original containers – should be discarded if they came in contact with flood or contaminated water. In the ideal setting, capsules, tablets, and liquids in drug containers with screw-top caps, snap lids, or droppers, should be discarded if they are contaminated. In addition, medications that have been placed in any alternative storage containers should be discarded if they have come in contact with flood or contaminated water.

In many situations, these drugs may be lifesaving and replacements may not be readily available. For these life-saving drugs, if the container is contaminated but the contents appear unaffected -- pills are dry -- the pills may be used until a replacement can be obtained. However, if a pill is wet, it is contaminated and should be discarded.

Children's drugs, which have to be made into a liquid using water, should only be reconstituted with purified or bottled water. Liquids other than water should not be used to reconstitute these products.

Some drugs require refrigeration (for example, insulin, somatropin, drugs that have been reconstituted). If electrical power has been off for a prolonged period, the drug should be discarded unless it is absolutely necessary to sustain life (for example, insulin).

If contaminated product(s) are considered medically necessary and/or would be difficult to replace in a time-sensitive manner, you should contact a healthcare provider (for example, Red Cross, poison control, health departments, etc.) for guidance.

If you are concerned about the efficacy or safety of a particular product, contact your pharmacist, health care provider or the manufacturer's customer service department.

For information on biological products, see [CBER information website](#).

For questions about specific drug products, call the FDA general number: 1-888-INFO-FDA.

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